

MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church & Society REPORT

Focus on the Ministry of Writing

Report #37, May-June 1981

A TREASURY OF GEMS FROM WOMEN WRITERS

The task of a compilation of women writers loomed as Mission Impossible. Where were these writers and how could I contact them? How could I approach professionals for "gratis" contributions? What over-burdened writer would take time to acknowledge a request for yet another submission? In many a troubled dream I found myself mailing an invisible volume of non-existent articles to our editor.

However, the response to my requests was overwhelming. The sincerity and modesty expressed in these articles is truly humbling. We express appreciation and gratitude to all of them. We hope this **Report** will give exposure, support and encouragement to all women in the ministry of writing. Those appearing here are Alma Barkman, Winnipeg; Helen Good Brenneman, Goshen, Ind.; Dora Dueck, Winnipeg; Wilma Derksen, Winnipeg; Mary M. Enns, Winnipeg; M. Epp, Waldheim, Sask.; LaVerna Klippenstein, Winnipeg; Elizabeth Peters, Winnipeg; Marion Keeney Preheim, Newton, Kan.; Ingrid Rimland, Stockton, Calif.; Anne Neufeld Rupp, Middlebury, Ind.; Rosalie Schlichting, Milford, Kan.; Barbara Claassen Smucker, Waterloo, Ont.; and Katie Funk Wiebe, Hillsboro, Kan.

We would appreciate hearing from many other writers to continue this project. Contact me at 89 Helmsdale Ave., Winnipeg, Man., R2K 0V6.

—Elsa Redekopp

Alma Barkman on "The Ministry of Humor." There are two things which prepare people to come to Christ: love and laughter. Laughter from pure delight of soul at no one's expense; laughter at sheer nonsense and fun. It is the expression of the joy which is our Christian heritage.

Having acquired neither a camel's hair coat nor a taste for grasshoppers, I don't see myself as a modern John the Baptist who stands in the wilderness of suburbia shouting "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Yet if love and laughter really do attract people to Christ, then that is my purpose for writing.

The fact that I am a homemaker provides me with a deep wellspring of humorous experiences from which to draw, and I am grateful to men and women who encourage me. My only hindrances are my own wrong

attitudes; my only enemies are my own expectations—too high, too low, or too few.

Response over the years has convinced me that a Christian writer is a responsible scribe held accountable in the kingdom of God. "Then Jesus said unto them, 'Therefore every scribe who is instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.'" (Matthew 13:52)

My books are *Sunny Side Up* (1977) and *Times to Treasure* (1980), both published by Moody Press. I have also written a weekly column for eight years in the *Carillon News* (Steinbach, Man.) and the *Saskatchewan Valley News* (Rosthern).

Helen Good Brenneman on "Having to Write." (As reported by Mary Fox in the 10 February 1981 *Goshen News*.) Seventeen years ago, Helen Good Brenneman walked out to her garden only to see a blur. Soon after, she lost all use of her legs, one hand, and partial use of the other hand. At 38 years of age, she was a victim of multiple sclerosis. Unable to do housework, the mother of four found she had time to devote to writing. "You do what you have to, and I always have had to write," she says.

But Not Forsaken (Herald Press, 1943, Moody Press, 1964) and *Meditations for the New Mother* (Herald, 1953) were written before the onslaught of MS. *But Not Forsaken* is a collection of true stories of refugees from Russia during and after World War II; it has been translated into German. *Meditations* (also in Spanish and Portuguese) has sold over 298,000 copies; says Helen, "That just boggles my mind that it keeps selling year after year. Even though I wrote it when my 30-year-old son was a baby, it still sells."

Succeeding books (all Herald Press) are *My Comforters* (1966) which gives reassurance to others who are ill; *Meditations for the Expectant Mother* (1968, and also in Spanish); *The House By the Side of the Road* (1971), on Christian hospitality; *Ring a Dozen Doorbells* (1973), dedicated to Helen's "liberated Christian women friends"; *Marriage Agony and Ecstasy* (1975); *Learning to Cope* (1976), showing through interviews with handicapped people that illness does

The MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society (formed in 1973) believes that Christ Jesus teaches equality of all persons. It strives to promote this belief through sharing information, concerns, and ideas relating to problems and issues which affect the status of women in church and society.

not mean the end; and *Morning Joy* (1981), meditations for persons suffering loss and for those ministering to them.

"I can type," says Helen, "but I can't see what I've typed so if someone interrupts me I don't know where I've left off." Friends type final drafts and look up references; interviews are typed.

"I look at myself like the little boy who brought his loaves and fishes to Christ. He couldn't take credit for multiplying them. That's how I feel about my books."

Dora Dueck on "The Hard, Wonderful Work of Writing" I have always loved words: first, hearing them read by my parents, then learning to read, and finally beginning to put words together myself.

I can see clearly that God has directed me to a ministry of written words. In my third year of Bible school, as copy editor of the yearbook, I realized I wanted to be involved in print media of some kind. Several years later I had the opportunity to become editor's assistant for the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*. This was unmistakably beyond my doing and I felt fortunate that I was able to write and learn how at the same time.

Now my husband and I have two small sons—a necessary and not unpleasant interruption in my writing efforts, but I have not abandoned my typewriter. I have just completed my B.A. degree (12 years after starting it!), I keep notes on our children's development, I have done several book editing assignments, and written some stories, devotionals and articles. Writing is what I want to do.

Writing is not easy for me. I enjoy the ideas, the research and the mental composition, but I procrastinate before confronting the page with pen or typewriter, fearing that the idea may be worthless. Once I am finished, though, it is wonderful to be a writer.

One recent experience testifies to God's steady nudging me. After I received Elsa Redekopp's request for comments for this *Report*, the doubts surfaced again. Me, a writer? Where's the body of work to sustain such a label? . . . The next day an unexpected check arrived in the mail from a mission newspaper which reprinted a children's story of mine from a back issue of the *Herald*. In the same mail came *Decision* magazine with several features on writing. Both were made-to-fit encouragements. I thank God.

I conclude with words from Psalms, which I have adopted as a motto for my writing endeavors: "My heart overflows with a good theme; I address my words to the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." (Psalm 45:1 NASV)

Wilma Derksen on "Being a Writer." To be a writer was my childhood fantasy. In a remodeled, cleaned-up

chicken coop, my first attempt at stringing a sentence together was a very private experience. So were the under-the-blanket partakings of forbidden books. My image of a writer was a person spending long hard hours, privately pounding on a typewriter, writing a book to be read by some other young girl snuggled under the covers.

Because a writer's audience is hidden, I was a long time realizing that writing is a very public venture. For someone terrified of even a small audience, this frightening truth resulted in monumental writer's blocks for me. I still stubbornly pretend that I'm communicating with an imaginary peer (now married, has two little girls, and never misunderstands anything) who appreciates my efforts.

I was well-prepared for the loneliness and boredom of a writing career; I wasn't prepared for the excitement and opportunity. Right now I'm weekly religion reporter for the *Winnipeg Sun* and feature writer for the *Downtowner/Suburban*. This allows me to meet many important people and ask them all those improper questions of interviewers (and be paid to do it!). Newspaper editors have told me that journalism is the best way to learn a city; I find I'm also learning about life. It's like being a prospector who has discovered gold, gathers nuggets of pure gold, and hides them away for the future when they will become invaluable.

Writing can be mundane as washing dishes, excruciating as having a tooth pulled, or euphoric as a visit to Alice in Wonderland. Writing is my hobby, my interest, my entertainment, my fulfillment, my job. It is more in a sense it becomes my purpose in life.

Molded by authors such as Grace Livingston Hill, Lloyd C. Douglas and C.S. Lewis, I knew the power of writing. That's why the Great Commission in the Bible, all the convicting sermons, and the still small voice of God urging me to introduce others to Christ was always translated into a compulsion to learn to write in hopes that some day I might be effective in this ministry.

In an interview with Calvin Miller, author of *The Singer*, I discovered this nugget of pure gold that I identify with: "In the final analysis, the essence of creativity and following God's example as Creator is an emptying of self. As a bucket is sent into a well, it can only be filled in proportion to its own emptiness."

I have much emptying to do.

Mary M. Enns on "Mennonite Women Writers." The most desired and gratefully-received favor that God has allowed to come my way is the opportunity to express myself in writing. When first I began to be published some 11 years ago I asked one thing of the Lord: "If my writing can give pleasure, even meaning to one dozen people, I will be grateful indeed." The returns, the compensations, the rewards have become an encour-

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agement, a vital force in my already rich life. To be allowed to share with a reading audience from a wealth of experiences is one of God's bonuses.

As a journalist in the Mennonite milieu I learned a great deal working on the writing staff of *The Mennonite Mirror*, a monthly magazine. Not only did this keep me cognizant and in touch with the Mennonite scene, but it made me more aware of the importance of personal involvement. Our past, as it relates to the present and the future of our people, was brought sharply into focus. Here my involvement with translations was an invaluable asset.

A writer must eventually make a choice as to the area of specifics, or where it is that primary interests and efforts are to centralize. It soon became apparent that I might like to concentrate on personality profiles. When my editors encouraged this I gratefully took advantage of the scope allowed me. To these profiles I have added travel articles, stories of personal experiences, as well as childhood tales.

My life has been enormously enriched by the various contacts I have made in doing the personality profiles. From the story on the family with three sightless children, I learned severely handicapped people can, with dogged determination, make a significant contribution. In the conversations with the "Umsiedler" in Espelkamp, Germany, I witnessed another kind of courage coupled with a humble gratitude for God's grace. The interview with a former prime minister of Canada showed me the vital importance of loyalty to a cause as well as integrity in decisions and issues as they present themselves to a person in his position. In interrogations with MCC personnel I discovered the far-reaching effect on human beings that this organization has world-wide. Once again, emphasis on personal involvement and consecration surfaced.

If my work as a writer has brought meaning into some lives it has accomplished the hoped-for goal. The chief reward was mine, of course, in the realization of fulfillment and deep personal enrichment. This has come about through the people with whom I rubbed shoulders, and who gave so generously of themselves and their experiences. Together we shared their lives with our readers.

M. Epp interviews herself.

Q. How long have you been writing?

A. I have been a full-time writer since 1949.

Q. Does that mean every day, all day?

A. It means that I've had no other gainful employment in these years.

Q. How much time on the average do you spend?

A. In my best writing months—October through April—I try to keep a regular schedule of seven and a half

hours daily, five days a week. This may be stretched to 10 or 12 hours if I am doing research. That is less exhausting than actual writing. In the summer months the gardener in me is apt to thrust the writer aside rather rudely.

Q. How did you get started at writing?

A. I have to go back to the day—I was seven—when I had a flash of intuition, a whisper from God, a private thing between us. This happened in China, where my parents were serving as missionaries under the China Mennonite Mission Society (Bartel Mission), and my older sister and two older brothers and I were attending boarding school at Tsaohsien, Shantung Province. The highlight of each week for me was Saturday night's story hour with our housemother, Mary DeGarmo. That may have been at the root of it. Suddenly one day I had this exciting secret knowledge that I would one day write books for boys and girls—and they would love them as I loved the story hour.

Q. And so you began writing early?

A. No. Many years passed. Many adverse things happened, which I was sure would make it impossible for me to realize my dream. A health problem brought our family back to Canada. Here we experienced the depression-dustbowl-grasshopper years. A spinal problem confined me to bed for long months at a time, and has remained a factor to be reckoned with. Poverty prevented me from attending high school. English is not my mother tongue. I became aware that I belonged to a minority within a minority within a minority.

Q. Could you explain that?

A. I was attracted to the field of Christian writing. But on this continent almost all denominational and interdenominational publishing houses were located south of the border. American editors naturally give preference to American copy—unless they deem the foreign copy superior. They have to. The majority of their readers are American. And I was Canadian. In a largely non-Christian world I was a Christian. Among Christians I belonged to the Evangelical wing. Among Evangelicals I knew myself to be a Mennonite. Each fact seemed to narrow down any chances of my ever making the grade. I wasted a lot of time deploring all the "insurmountable obstacles" in my path.

Q. But you eventually began writing?

A. I believe God gave me a sense of call. It became clear to me that God had equipped me with whatever talent I possessed, and placed me in my setting. Surely, then, there must be books that I could write, and markets that would welcome them.

Q. You've been writing chiefly for children?

A. In number of titles, yes. In actual word-count my writings for adults equals the writing for youth.

Q. How long does the average book take to write?

A. There is no average. It's like asking How long does it take to put up a building? What kind of building are we talking about? A housing complex? A doghouse? Nor does the size of the building—or book—tell the whole story. Many non-writers seem to think anyone can toss off a children's book. Try it. It entails slipping into the thought-stream, interests, activities, sorrows and joys of a child—and that's no easy thing for an adult. Some books call for a lot of research.

Q. You've done a good deal of traveling. How can you afford it?

A. I always allow others to foot the bills! There was a sudden—and to me very disturbing—shift in markets in the late sixties. Because of financial uncertainties, long-familiar markets closed. Shortly after, I began getting bids to write books on assignment. Until then I'd been freelancing mostly. Now Prairie Bible Institute of Three Hills, Alta., for instance, sent me around the world to visit 25 countries (80,000 miles) to interview roughly 400 graduates who were missionaries. Out of this was born *Into All the World*, the school's 50th anniversary book.

Q. You enjoy traveling?

A. I don't look forward to traveling alone. That trip for PBI was too hurried and too harried to be considered ideal: notebook and tape recorder always in hand, afraid I'd miss an opportunity, feeling responsible to my sponsors to make the most of my time. Exhausting but exhilarating.

Q. How many books have you written?

A. I've had 36 published. By the time this goes to press, the 37th will have come off the press.

Q. Does writing pay?

A. If you mean in dollars and cents, it's not a lush living. But I'm alive and solvent. I'm doing work that challenges me, that taxes all of me—emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually. What more could one ask? In spite of difficulties and discouragements, I have no regrets.

Q. How much "Mennonite" writing have you done?

A. I see all writing by Mennonite as "Mennonite" writing. But I understand you. My first book was a Mennonite novel, *A Fountain Sealed*. It was serialized five times (once by a Mennonite press), was published in hard covers and later in paperback, and—after some years in limbo—it is about to be reissued again by Zondervan. Other titles in this category are: *No-Hand Sam*, and *But God Hath Chosen*—both assignments for the Mennonite Brethren publishing house in Hillsboro, Kan. *This Mountain Is Mine*, freelance biography, the story of H.C. Bartel of China, was published by Moody Press. Another Moody book, *Walk in My Woods*, is autobiographical. *Proclaim Jubilee* traces the history of the Mennonite Brethren Bible school movement in western Canada. *8., Tulpengasse*, written on assignment for Christian Press (Mennonite Brethren) in Winnipeg, tells the story of a church in Vienna, Austria. *The Earth Is Round*, also a Christian Press production,

was written to commemorate the 1870s migration of Mennonites to this continent.

Q. How can a young person know that he or she has what it takes to make a go of writing?

A. There are a few essentials: a love of good reading; a love of and facility with words; a streak of originality; a love of creative solitude. You had better be a good self-starter, as well as a good finisher. Inspiration is all very well, but dedicated stubbornness is as important. The former gets you started and the latter keeps you plugging away.

Q. Any final comments?

A. Just this. There's much talk now about realism in writing—and by this is frequently meant a lot of moral sludge that passes for art. Somewhere I read a statement that has become my motto: "The stars are as real as the garbage can." And much more uplifting wouldn't you say?

Writing can seldom be a first for women if they are wives and mothers. Mothers don't have a secretary. They don't have wives. They can be interrupted by most anyone. They are eased out of writing early unless they make peace between family concerns and writing.—Katie Funk Wiebe

LaVerna Klippenstein on "Writing a Column." The man introduced himself and paid me what was meant to be a fine compliment. "Even men," he said, "read what you write." I should have been impressed. Instead I was puzzled. I do not see myself as a woman writer, but simply as a person who expresses concerns, ideas and insights. I am thankful for the opportunities and aware of my inadequacies. As a Christian I must be concerned first with faithfulness to God. My writing must communicate hope. That's a continual challenge to deeper commitment.

"Your *Christian Living* [Mennonite Publishing House] column is like a letter to me every month," a friend wrote. I had never thought of it that way. For me it's simply journal jottings, thoughts to keep and ponder, and sometimes it's a matter of pulling something together to meet a deadline—when the pace of life leaves me time only to act instead of think, or experiences important to me are too difficult, too personal or too inappropriate to print. Then there are those times when I'm convinced I have a head full of feathers instead of a brain.

How do I find time to write? It's not easy. Being bone lazy, I'm always hoping that writing will get easier. It never does. I've tried all kinds of artful dodging, but the only thing that works is work.

I like to spend mornings reading or writing. Often I don't. But at least I've reached the point where I'm annoyed if the phone rings, frustrated if it's a beautiful day and the laundry should be on the line, and miserably guilty when I spend that time with the newspaper.

it never used to bother me. Perhaps that's progress.

Trying to write is as frustrating as reading is rewarding. Most consider it a form of recreation or self-indulgence. Few understand that an hour of fretting over a poorly-written paragraph uses more energy than a week of work.

It's often a matter of choosing between the typewriter and the vacuum cleaner. Because I'm dust conscious and enjoy housekeeping, choosing a book or a blank piece of paper has not been easy for me.

Nor is it made easier by the fact that I read and write and think slowly. I like to feel and absorb ideas. I like to remember facts. I may sit at my desk all morning and write two sentences, only to cross them out at noon.

Why then do I write? Because I'm beginning to get more satisfaction from expressing clearly one idea important to me than from completing spring cleaning by May 1st. Or July 31st. And once in a great while a significant insight or concern must be shared. For that I prefer using paper to the telephone.

Although I am not hesitant to voice my convictions, I hesitate to show my articles even to close relatives—as though that's immodest. Yet I'm never embarrassed about my baking.

One of my struggles has been my wish to remain anonymous. I believe a writer should be honest and have the courage of her convictions, but I have not particularly enjoyed the visibility which writing has brought to me. Sometimes I worry that an article has not been tactful enough. Or kind.

Another problem with appearing in print is that people hold on to her position forever. Others are allowed to gain new insight or outgrow an opinion. But once a writer's comments have been read she is not permitted to change.

"What are you doing?" asks the voice on the phone.

"Writing," I answer.

"Good. I hoped to catch you when you were free."

She wouldn't understand that I'd sooner be interrupted while I'm painting the porch.

There is no profession as personal as writing and good devotional writing exposes a person at the deepest levels.

My writing remains a vulnerable area. I am careless about criticism of my housekeeping, hair, clothes or cooking. I am sensitive to criticism about my writing.

Anyone who has written has met those who say, "I read

your article," only to look puzzled when you ask "Which one?"

Many, I fear, will someday rush up to Hosea, Joel and Jeremiah, and be rebuked by a similar question.

I have a hunch that the prophets won't mind that the individuality of their material has blurred. Their concern was not personal visibility but the powerful revelation of God's way with people.

Ultimately everything I write will disappear—except what glorifies God. Not only must I remember that; I must write with that clearly in mind.

Elizabeth Peters on "A Continuing Dominant Theme." When I look back at the sum total of all my literary efforts, the question arises: what was the most compelling theme? An objective answer cannot be ascertained, I suppose, due to the diversity of topics and vehicles of publication in which my writings have appeared, since they range from diary, travelogue, biography, textbooks, short stories, plays and—most recently—translation. Perhaps one could simply say the moving force of it all was the miracle of life in a beautiful world full of joy and hope and sorrow. Many years in a professional position have no doubt helped to shape my style, and certainly my outlook on life itself. Every year I have the wonderful opportunity to have young students come to me, full of laughter and hope, setting out on their own course. Frequently they return to visit me, sometimes successful and secure, often spent, despondent and disillusioned, still struggling to accept their destiny. Their response to challenge has always fascinated me, and very frequently has found its way into my writing.

Being a hopeless romanticist, it is natural that all my writing should have a romantic tinge, even when my concerns are the most everyday occurrences. I found that in my short play, "Nur eine alte Orgel," the romantic element was dominant, rewrote the whole thing and consequently to this day consider it rather dull. Perhaps it is this inclination to the romantic that leads me to rate my reminiscences as my best writing. Of course, they keep popping up in my creative writing, always enriching and shaping ideas and characters.

For the past six years I have become more and more absorbed in translation and editing, an art and craft in its own right. The selections I translated from the Low-German writer, Arnold Dyck, such as *Two Letters*, *The Millionaire of Goatfield* and others, reflect my preference for the aesthetic arrangement of poetry volumes, such as Fritz Senn's *Das Dorf im Abendgrauen*; I am in love with words when I translate from dialect which has become so elusive to most of our people today. Unavoidably the language presents a strong identification with

My Mennonite conscience told me I should find sufficient meaning in life as the wife of Rev. Walter Wiebe, without making any specific contribution of my own. Most Mennonite women had done so. My mother had never had any other aspirations. Or had she? The thought dumbfounded me. Had she buried her longings for creative expression deep inside her as she baked pan after pan of Zwieback and Platz?—Katie Funk Wiebe

the ways of Mennonite life in its social, economic, intellectual and spiritual aspects. I am currently translating *Unser Auszug Nach Mittelasien* by Bartsch, and am hoping to start on *Die Flucht über den Amur*. The same strengths and frailties, the same suffering and joy that I see around me today, pervade the histories of those who lived in a distant era. Perhaps the most truthful observation about my writing is that it reflects my absorption with the way our people live, then and now.

Marion Keeney Preheim on "A Pattern in Retrospect." I have always struggled with a need to fulfill myself beyond managing a household. With three children under the age of three, it became apparent to me that writing would have to be my "work." My first question was how I would find the time. I would have to become more efficient at chores that did not involve the children. I timed myself at ironing so I could do it faster and faster; dishes whizzed through the air; I dusted with one hand and picked up with the other. With the children, on the other hand, I spent long hours. But, ah, once they were in bed for naps I had my free time to spend at creative writing.

When we lived in Kansas, I tried a few children's stories, wrote a month of meditations for *Our Family Worship*s, wrote another month of meditations, and then was asked to edit *Our Family Worship*s. Each issue consisted of articles for parents and three months of devotionals based on Scriptures from Sunday school curriculum. Here was the very outlet I had been looking for; I was elated. But one day my supervisor called me in: the editorship was to be given to a full-time employee they hoped to hire. It was obvious to my supervisor that I was on the verge of tears. Not long after, he called to say that the person had declined the full-time job, and I could continue as editor. I had learned, however, how easily dispensable I was. As it turned out, I edited the magazine for seven years, until it became *Rejoice*, jointly published by the Mennonite Brethren and General Conference Mennonite churches.

When we moved to Pennsylvania, the Institute of Mennonite Studies asked me to write a 100-page book about adjustment to overseas service. I read 400 hours of books, hired household help to take care of home chores, and worked afternoons when the children took naps. With proceeds from the book I brought a child from Korea, whom we adopted.

Invited to join a General Conference committee planning a Sunday school curriculum revision, I shared some teaching ideas that I had been using in a sixth grade class and, as a result, was invited to write a quarter of materials. This began about a 12-year span in which I wrote various quarterlies for third to ninth grades. I got up early and stayed up late to get my work done, especially after we added a fifth child in 1968.

We went overseas to Zaire in 1972 for an assignment with Mennonite Central Committee. I did about eight articles there, and learned that I needed assignments to spur me to work; I did not operate well on a free-lance

style. I was also struggling with how little value the institutional church seemed to place on my services.

When we returned from overseas, a midlife crisis hit me. I had always had some writing that satisfied me for the time I had available. However, with my last child off to school I had a lot of time and no niche. No one was calling on me to write. So I decided to take some initiative. MCC was having some historical writings done by the Institute of Mennonite Studies; I asked to be a researcher, and in turn, they asked me to write five of the 15 biographies of MCC people (to be published this year). It was a better offer than I had expected.

When those were finished, I served as assistant for research among the Amish (realizing again that I wanted to write, not just gather data), and wrote news articles for MCC—which led to a full-time job for about a year. When my husband became restless, he said, "This time we will look first for a job for you." While we were thinking about this, however, an offer came for him to serve as General Secretary of the General Conference Mennonite Church, offices in Newton, Kan. One of his first doubts was what would happen to me. I had wrestled so long to find the right job.

At the 1980 MCC annual meeting after which we were to meet a representative from Newton about my husband's job possibility, I was so preoccupied that I slipped out of the sessions to think alone in the nearby church sanctuary. There the idea came to me to volunteer for a half-time voluntary service writing job at the Newton office. The board has a policy of not hiring executives' wives, but decided to accept my offer. That is the job I am now doing.

My life has been one of working a step at a time, the pattern of a career evident only in retrospect. The struggle still continues as I work out each day what it means to try to serve as a writer.

Ingrid Rimland on "Success." It is strange that you would ask me just now to write a few words. What is success? Isn't success, like beauty, in the eyes of the beholder? This question has been at the very core of my new manuscript-in-progress (working title: *Mountainseed*), a true-to-life success story of Erwin, my brain-damaged child.

Erwin was hurt very badly in infancy and written off as "hopeless" by more doctors, schools and institutions than I care to remember. We did not believe it. We fought, we cried, we struggled, we prayed. Two summers ago, we saw him graduate from a legitimate high school with a legitimate honor's degree. He is still badly limited in many different areas and many functional ways. He has almost no hearing and limited vision in only one eye. He sweats with the effort of holding a pencil. But he has learned to read and write. He can spell—not only forward, but backward. He has an excellent memory, the diligence and perseverance of an ant, the heart and soul of an angel, and more friends than you and I. He works. He pays taxes. He is not on anyone's pocket or in anyone's way. When he was little and I lost patience, he once declared: "...Watch me! I'll

get me a mountainseed. I'll grow me my very own mountain..." So he has, my brave little limited boy. Who's to say that's not success? Who can do better?

Mountainseed is more than half-finished. Three weeks ago I went to New York to talk to the executive editor of Bantam Books, Grace Bechtold. While she liked the story very much, she told me: "The market is flooded with stories of defective children. I hate to tell you this, but I am dubious as to its commercial success." Well, she is wrong. When I first started to market *The Wanderers* (Concordia, 1977), a Houghton-Mifflin editor told me: "This is such a catalogue of calamities that nobody, but nobody, will want to struggle through it." Later he wished he had bought it. So it will be with *Mountainseed*. I know it is good. I know it has a message to inspire all of us who grow such miserly molehills where mountains could be grown.

Success? A potboiler? A formula-written beach read? A two-week bestseller? A two million dollar advance? I guess success, for a writer, is knowing precisely when not to let go.

Anne Neufeld Rupp answers the question, "Why Do I Write?". I'm still surprised when someone addresses me as a writer, especially on those days when I am confronted by a blank piece of paper and when no words seem to flow, or when the mailbox yields only returned manuscripts and rejection slips. Yet by the very nature of things, I'm destined to write. My memory bank is oriented toward self expression, and writing becomes a tool for that. That memory begins with growing-up days on the Manitoba prairie, and story-telling by my parents—stories out of their own lives that somehow spilled into mine and gave me an identifiable past. Along with that, books and reading were always okay in our home, even when there wasn't money or time for other things.

School provided not so much an influence, as a setting for writing. Creative writing had next to no space in the one room schoolhouses of the forties, but there was much time for reading, and I read and re-read the books of our four-shelf library. By sixth grade I had concocted a story: fiercely moralistic, it was about a girl's appendectomy after she swallowed stolen cherries, pits and all. It was my first proud attempt to put something on paper besides answers to teacher's questions.

When teen-age years arrived, my writing went underground. Extremely shy, I read and wrote poetry to keep in touch with my humanity. An 11th grade teacher called me in to discuss an A+ essay I had written. It was evident he thought I had copied it. I had prayed for insight while writing that essay. It was mine. Reassured of this, the teacher affirmed my potential, and en-

couraged me to write. That was a star in my heaven, but not taken seriously because of other vocational thrusts.

During my 20s I was approached by publications to write articles and reports. Non-paying. Enjoyable. A friend said, "You don't write like you talk." I didn't have the courage to ask whether that was meant as praise or criticism.

Seminary days brought life into perspective, with a reassessment of who I was and what my gifts were. Poetry sermons brought affirmations from classmates with the request that I try to publish. A Mennonite publication purchased my first poem.

That was over 15 years ago. Since then my writing has increased, and the types have varied. Although never writing more than two days a week, a variety of articles, devotionals, poetry, some songs, and curriculum have been published. About 20 publications have bought my materials, and new doors keep opening.

Someone asked me, "When are you going to stop writing only for the religious market?" Someone else said, "You'll never be a great writer because you like to spend too much time with people." Both statements say as much about my personality as about my limits. Although every writer fantasizes about a prize-winning novel (and I dream of the fiction I'd like to try) time, creative potential and personality limits keep me within the security of the religious market. I've grown up in the church, I pastor a church, and maintain that faithful discipleship is the essence of life. It's the world I'm most familiar with. Yet someday I may try to venture into the secular world, believing that I have something of value to say there as well.

Why then do I write? 1) Creative expression is an essential element to my sense of wholeness, whether through music, art or writing. My focus has increasingly moved in the last direction. I have to write. It is self-expression that creates inner balance. 2) Intellectual stimulation is another reason. It is challenging to research for an article, and then put it together in a form that makes sense. 3) New relationships are formed through contact with readers and editors. Each is a growth experience. 4) Financial remuneration can't be bypassed. When an editor actually wants what you have, and is willing to pay for it, it attaches a sense of worth. 5) The belief that what I write could be helpful to someone in Christian experience makes writing worthwhile. A member of our church said, "Through her writing Anne is a witness on behalf of our congregation." Working with divorced persons and feeling their pain led me to research and write articles on divorce and step-parenting. Writing devotionals helps families share and discuss their faith. Writing curriculum and education articles assists teachers. Personal experience articles create a sense of identity in readers and a

My memory bank is oriented toward self-expression, and writing becomes a tool for that. That memory begins with growing-up days on the Manitoba prairie, and story-telling by my parents—stories out of their own lives that somehow spilled into mine and gave me an identifiable past. Along with that, books and reading were always okay in our home, even when there wasn't time or money for other things.—Anne Neufeld Rupp

High school writing groups are always amazed when I tell them that I set aside a certain time for writing each day. One girl exclaimed, "But writers aren't supposed to be like that! You're supposed to write when you're inspired!" Very few of us can afford that luxury. Writing on a schedule is something one learns to do with practice. The fact that my youngest son is off to kindergarten and will descend on me again in exactly two hours and 35 minutes is all the motivation I need to use that time productively.—Phyllis Reynolds, "There's a Rock in My Shoe..." With, August-September 1973

new desire to cope. Last summer a reader wrote, "I read your first-person article narrative about Moses' mother giving up her son. Our son is getting married next month..." A reader had identified with an experience.

When you put all this together—the why, how, and what—writing makes sense for me. After having to explain myself in an article of this length, I'm beginning to feel like a writer!

Rosalie Schlichting on "Frustration and Answers." Dear God, I want to pound on the wall with my fists! You know all things. Is there an answer? I can't seem to find it! How many of my 31 years of marriage have I sent down the drain with the dish water? And who cares? Will I be awarded a bronze plaque for service done to humanity? And how many years have I cooked into row upon row of jar after jar filled with green beans, each one exactly like the one next to it? Then there are the endless meetings where I smile, listen, play the piano and give the closing prayer. All the while my soul wants to lose itself in words and ideas, to see them come alive on a page.

Sometimes I tell myself the housework will wait—and it does! I come back to the piled-up mess in the kitchen, dust curls in the corner, sticky finger prints on the door handles, the piles of unwashed clothes. I find that my husband has felt shut out while my spirit has been away. No, I've been trained too well for this; I can't take the strain of guilt.

God, what is the answer?

"They" say, "Do the housework first. Then you'll have an incentive to hurry. When it's all done you'll feel free to write—all day if you like." Little do "they" know! When, Lord, is the "work all done"?

And when this rare time does come, what happens? I sit down with my freshly-sharpened pencil and come up with a sterile mind. The inspirations of two days ago have been scrubbed away with Pine-Sol, Comet and Tide. I close my eyes to concentrate: I see rows of canned green beans, stack of sparkling dishes, drawers of folded laundry and cupboards where nothing falls out when the door is opened. And I love these things! But nothing comes from my pencil—nothing.

Who am I, God? I'm really two people forced to live as one—or is it three or four or more? They all clamor for expression. But I've been well-trained. The wife-mother-Christian-worker wins out and does what is "right." The writer keeps on silently screaming. When I'm gone there will be nothing to show I've been here. The dish water will be all dried up, the beans will have been eaten, the clothes will be outgrown and discarded, and someone

else will play the piano and close the meeting with prayer.

My Daughter, I hear your prayer of frustration. I identify with you. Yes, I experienced frustration and anger, too. Does that surprise you? It is possible to feel these emotions and not sin.

Do you think I had only lofty "spiritual" impulses? Remember, I was human too. I spent most of my earthly years in a carpenter shop, supporting my family. The nail-pegs that wouldn't go in right, the wood that splintered, the blackened thumbnail—I experienced them all! Do you imagine I never struggled with the thought, "If I'm the Messiah, what am I doing in this dingy little shop?"

Have you considered the frustration my perfect intellect felt at dull, closed minds, at blind adherence to traditions, or at the incapacity of the crowds to comprehend even simple spiritual truths? Have you thought how I felt about the throngs of hurting people who strained for my touch, but couldn't reach me because there were too many for one person? My work seemed endless too. Yet, I was never hurried or rushed or confused.

This is the answer: I always did my Father's will.

Why are you doing the things you do? Is it because you are convinced that they are God's will for you? Or are you working for the approval of other people? Sometimes it is your own approval you want! Do you really need that super housekeeper image? Remember what I told Martha.

Do this: Each morning discover God's will for the day. God's expectations of you are realistic.

And remember: The beans that were eaten, the clothes that were washed, the comfortable home you created all worked together to make a family of responsible people who understand about love. No, you won't get a bronze plaque—but aren't flesh-and-blood "monuments" more interesting?

One more thing: When you smiled and listened and prayed, I was able to touch many who were straining to reach me!

Barbara Claassen Smucker on "Being a Mennonite Woman Writer." Several years ago I was asked to write an article on this subject. The idea of being a woman versus being a man didn't enter my head. I was concerned with the idea that you don't consciously impose your beliefs on the reader if you write fiction, but rather, if you are a Christian these come through in your characters and story. And if you happen to be Mennonite you carry the joy as well as the burden of martyrs,

missionaries and great spiritual leaders in your past. You constantly wonder if you are worthy of claiming such an affiliation. And then, if you write for a wider audience, as I try to do, you realize that being a Mennonite is only one way of being a Christian. God's love includes all of humankind.

In this article I have been asked to concentrate on being a woman writer. Since most of my writing is for children, I have discovered that this is an area where there are many outstanding women writers. Among my favorites of men and women authors, I would list an equal number of each sex. In various publishing houses, however, in both Canada and the U.S., the majority of editors for children's books are women. This is slowly changing and perhaps this is health—as long as the reason is interest and ability and not the higher wages that are being paid and added prestige that is now connected with this area of book publishing.

A little-known problem that I have as a woman writer is that most people don't think of it as "a job." Hours of time alone are needed to write any book. Some writers rip their telephones off the wall; others seek a cottage or cabin to find some isolation. I have gone to motels on occasion just to get away from daily demands that women are expected to fulfill. If a man, on the other hand, is writing he is often given a study in the home and the children are told not to disturb him. Someone takes his telephone messages. Writing for a man is usually considered "a job." A woman who writes needs a study too. I now have my own cluttered quarters where I spend a great deal of time. This is extremely important to me.

But, whether male or female, there are many pluses in having writing as a hobby or a career. Now that I have become a senior citizen, I find there is no mandatory retirement age. My last two books (*Underground to Canada or Runaway to Freedom*, 1977 and 1978, and *Days of Terror*, 1979) were written since I became 60 years old and seem to have the largest sales and the most enthusiastic responses.

The main discrimination I notice as a writer of children's fiction is that this field is often not considered serious literature. This is wrong! Good children's books, like good adult books, are good literature. They can be read and appreciated by all ages in varying degrees.

But regardless of age or gender, all writing ceases if there is no inspiration, and inspiration comes from God. It can only be prayed for.

Katie Funk Wiebe on "Barriers that Are Not Real." A few years ago I found an old notebook in the bottom of the trunk my parents gave me when I finished high school. On a loose sheet I had written: "I'm afraid to be a writer....I know I shouldn't [be]. No one will ever see these things I write. No one will ever know they belonged to a girl who once had hopes and dreams...." Were those my words? I thought writing had been the product of my middle years. But there it was: "I want to write."

As a high school senior I had inherited a strange

mixture of values. Freedom was entrusted to the top students in a school where gender was never considered a deterrent to any vocational goal; at the same time I had unconsciously absorbed the values of my Mennonite home. Mother, while she ladled sour cream gravy and fried Russian pancakes, drew the family together through her open acceptance of her role as keeper of the home. Father knew the hardships of earning a living without an education, but his limited understanding of what lay ahead in the "New World" could not push me over the hurdles into writing.

About 1956 I typed myself a little note again: "Today I have been doing a lot of thinking about writing...The whole problem seems to resolve itself around the matter of having something to write about."

By this time I was married to a preacher studying religious journalism, and had three children. My first writing attempts led to helping my husband in his work of editing a small periodical for youth workers in the church. When he suggested to the administrative committee that because I was doing most of the work and apparently quite successfully, I be appointed editor, their reaction was negative. In the Mennonite world, women did not teach nor usurp authority over men, even in writing I was crushed.

For a time I fought a battle against two enemies, both of whom should have been my best friends—God and myself. Was I trying to wiggle out from under the authority of God's Word? My Mennonite conscience told me I should find sufficient meaning in life as the wife of Rev. Walter Wiebe, without making any specific contribution of my own. Most Mennonite women had done so. My mother had never had any other aspirations. Or had she? The thought dumbfounded me. Had she buried her longings for creative expression deep inside her as she baked pan after pan of *Zwieback* and *Platz*?

If I fought what seemed to be the voice of God, I fought myself also. The craving to write was part of me, yet I couldn't acknowledge it as mine. The men in black suits and with open Bible said it shouldn't be in me, and I did want to please them. But I wanted to discover through writing the meaning of life and to let others know how I felt. I needed a mentor, someone to encourage me, to stroke, to guide, to support my dreams and help put them into effect. My role models were loving, generous women who made excellent *Vereniki*, but understood little of my longing to give myself away on paper. Further, it was unseemly for women to move into any field which might put them into competition with men or where they might judge masculine fields of endeavor.

As I began to write, both fear of success and fear of failure haunted me. How do you think you can write with authority? If fear sat on one side, guilt moved in

Inspiration comes from God. It can only be prayed for. —Barbara Claassen Smucker

close on the other. Shouldn't you be baking another batch of cookies for the children?

In "The Red Line," Rudy Wiebe's short story which became a chapter in *The Blue Mountains of China* (McClelland and Stewart, 1970), a Mennonite girl on the ship crossing the ocean to her new home, becomes bored with life behind the barrier (a red line on the floor) which separates the immigrants from the first-class passengers. Boldly she crosses the red line into their life.

In a critical review of the story, I wrote, "In defiance of her Mennonite-trained conscience she sets out to explore this new world and finds that the barriers are not real—only man-made. She can easily pass each one."

Though for a while every time I sat down to write, a jury of six solemn men with Bibles open to First Timothy watched me work, I slowly realized the barriers before me were not divine interdicts. The barriers were man-made, but they were also in me. I had to be persistent. I moved forward once again. Bumping, blundering, blustering, battering, bluffing and blessing I crossed over. (From *The Ethnic Woman: Problems, Protests, Lifestyle*, ed. Edith Blinksilver, Kendall/Hunt)

Katie's column "Viewpoint" appears in four Mennonite periodicals. Among her books are: *Alone, A Widow's Search for Joy*, Tyndale, 1976, also in British, German and South African editions; *Day of Disaster: The Story of Modern-day Samaritans*, Herald Press, 1976; *Our Lamps Were Lit: An Informal History of the Bethel Deaconess Hospital School of Nursing*, Alumni Association of Bethel Hospital School of Nursing, Newton, Ks., 1978; *Good Times with Old Times: How to Write Your Memoirs*, Herald Press, 1979; *Women Among the Brethren: The Story of 15 Mennonite Brethren and Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Women*, Board of Christian Literature of General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1979; and *Second Thoughts*, Kindred Press, 1981.

Jobs that Need Doing

(A new column that welcomes your suggestions.)

1. Document and describe the dramatic activities of Canada's "Voice of Women," particularly in effecting the reunion of Mennonite families separated by war.

2. Write the story of missionary-to-China, 1917 to 1950, Aganetha Fast who died recently at age 92.

3. Write the story of Phoebe Yoder who single-handedly convinced the Eastern Board of Missions to begin work in Africa, and later herself set up clinics and planted rose gardens.

4. Begin a bibliography of published Mennonite women writers.

5. Collect oral history and stories (with a tape recorder) from the elderly women among us. Transcribe and share.

6. Collect and translate into many languages the 200 hymns of Soetgen Gerrits, Anabaptist "Fanny Crosby" of Rotterdam (died 26 December 1572).

7. Translate into English "Suzanne's" 25-page account in *Guldene Aeppfel* (See "Are Anabaptists Motherless?" by Dorothy Yoder Nyce in *Which Way Women?*)

news and verbs

Joetta Handrich of MCC's Hunger Concerns has authored *Living Lightly: New Priorities for Home Economics*, a teacher's guide for 11 lessons on responsible living. Designed for secondary or junior college level, the guide provides a format for teachers to incorporate in their classrooms the issues raised by *Living More With Less* by Doris Janzen Longacre. The guide is available for \$2 from Mennonite Central Committee (201-1483 Pembina Hwy., Winnipeg, Man., R3T 2C8 or 21 South 12th St., Akron, Pa., 17501).

Gayle Gerber Koontz, former editor of this *Report*, will be teaching theology at Goshen College, Goshen, Ind., beginning in fall 1981.

Christine Hamilton, Denver, Colo., is the author of a 32-page paper entitled "Women and Militarism."

Muriel Thiessen Stackley authored a "broadside" of six poems for the Nebraska MCC relief sale in April. Five of the six are "rooted" in Nebraska.

Audrey Sorrento is the Native American author of the prayer "for the healing of the world" used for the 94th World Day of Prayer, convening in March, in 150 countries by the 25,000-member Church Women United.

Susan Gerbrandt, president of Canadian Women in Mission, reports that the organization's 4,500 members gave almost \$448,000 for church causes in 1980; Mennonite Central Committee received the largest amount and the (General Conference Mennonite) Commission on Overseas Mission the second largest amount.

LaVerna Klippenstein will be the author of this year's Women in Mission devotional resource packet. Jeannie Zehr, editor of *Window to Mission*, will produce a "Bright Ideas" booklet for program planning.

Mary Dueck, Fresno, Calif., outgoing member of the MCC Task Force on Women in Church and Society, is in a team of "teachers of English to speakers of other languages" (TESOL) going from Goshen College to the People's Republic of China to lead an English language institute. Other women in the 13-member group are Fanni Birky, Suzanne Gross, Marissa Chorlian, Madeleine Enns, Nancy Virginia Lee, A. Grace Wenger and Linda Yoder.

Pheme Perkins of Boston (Mass.) College delivered a series of five in the Bethel College Bible Lectures. She is author of six books and editor of *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*.

Wilma Bailey, New York City, will build a resource library of black and Hispanic literature for Sunday schools, retreats, youth groups and Bible studies for Mennonite Board of Missions. She is a former assistant pastor of Grace Mennonite Chapel in Saginaw, Mich.

Margaret Foth is the writer of award-winning "Your Time," 4½-minute daily radio program produced by the Mennonite Board of Missions. Three recent topics were "Retraining for Employment," "Choices After High School," and "Job Hunting?" For copies, write Box 1252, Harrisonburg, Va. 22801.

Elatne Sommers Rich is the author of *Am I This Countryside?*, a collection of poems published by Pinchpenny Press, Goshen College, Goshen, Ind. 46526 (paperback, 37 pages, \$2 plus 50¢ for mailing).

Helene Langevin-Joliot was principal speaker at a demonstration in Stiftplatz, Kaiserlautern, Federal Republic of Germany, last October to protest the North Atlantic Treaty's Organization's plan to deploy new medium-range missiles in Europe. Helene is the daughter of famous peace activists the Joliot-Curies, granddaughter of Marie and Pierre Curie, and a nuclear physicist in her own right.

Angie Williams and *Elizabeth Neff* were the women on the nine-member findings committee at the Consultation on Continuing Concerns held in Berne, Ind., 30-31 March 1981.

Cornelia Lehn's collection of very tellable peace stories is entitled *Peace Be With You* (Faith and Life Press, 1981) and is available for \$9.95.

Lucille Teichert, Mennonite Central Committee volunteer from New York state, works with five young women in Pitseng, Botswana, each of whom teaches a literacy class of seven to 18 people. All but 10 of the 70 students are women.

Loes Wessels is a Mennonite woman in Holland who refused to pay \$62 last year in taxes, protesting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization decision to put 572 new nuclear missiles in Western Europe. The Dutch government threatened to dispose of all her household goods, when a "friend" paid the fine. Now it begins all over again because of Loes's refusal, on grounds of conscience, to pay a portion of the following year's taxes. (At press time, momentum of protest is forcing arms limitations talks.)

Resource Listing of Mennonite/Brethren in Christ Women continues to be a useful tool to search committees. To have your name added to the list, write Ron Flickinger, Peace Section, MCC, 21 South 12th St., Akron, Pa. 17501.

Dame Cecily Saunders, British doctor who pioneered the hospice movement at Saint Christophers of London, is recipient of the \$200,000 Templeton Prize for this year.

Marguerite Yourcenar was elected last year to the French Academy, the first woman to be elected in 40 years.

Rosie Epp, Wichita, Kan., pastor, represents the MCC Task Force on Women in Church and Society in evaluating the task force, May 14-15. Other members of this review committee are Eber Dourte of Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Peace Section and Margaret Loewen Reimer of the Canadian Peace and Social Concerns Committee.

Bertha Beachy, Goshen, Ind., book store manager, will represent the MCC Task Force on Women in Church and Society at Mennonite World Conference planning sessions in Nairobi, Kenya, 21-26 July 1981.

Carol Embree Pendell has been elected international president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom at its triennial world congress in Connecticut. She will have a three-year term.

Elise Boulding was awarded the 17th annual "Woman of Conscience" citation by the National Council of Women of the U.S.

Ruth Unrau, writer and college business teacher, conducted a creative writing workshop at last January's WEB (Women Enrolled at Bethel) Day, Bethel College, North Newton, Kan.

Gro Harlem Brundtland is the new prime minister of Norway. She is a medical doctor and mother of four children.

Pam Dintaman Gingrich is the new director of deaf ministries at Mennonite Board of Missions, Elkhart, Ind.

Shirley Hershey Showalter wrote "a social history of the creative woman" (focusing on American authors Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow and Willa Cather) as her Ph.D. dissertation for the University of Texas. Shirley is a Goshen College professor.

Miriam Krantz, Mennonite Board of Missions worker in Nepal, has been asked to co-author a manual on child nutrition and health to be published by an agency of the United Nations.

The Swiss version of the equal rights amendment will be voted on 14 June. The compactly worded measure proposes equal rights in laws, at home and in the workplace, as well as "equal pay in jobs of equal value." Swiss women received the right to vote 10 years ago. The current legislation has been preceded by six years of drafting and debate. —*Lincoln (Neb.) Journal and Star*, 8 February 1981.

Letters

Muriel, last night my insomnia led me to finish reading the *Report* on women and militarism. What a special joy to know each of the contributors. Together they form a kaleidoscope of truth on a subject we can no longer afford to ignore, even as "the quiet in the land." After reading I pondered the matter of action. Are we still only analyzing... articulately, or do we also act, hearing the Divine call to do so even if it means risk and suffering? In that light I looked at the articles again, especially the endings. Do the writers call us to hear and do? (The biblical word for hearing implies acting on that which is heard or it is not really heard.) I know that Janet Reedy is a person who acts, even though this particular article is not that specific... Bev's article on social costs to women is very good, but I sense we could use more specifics in acting upon her analysis. Sara is strong on demonstrating belief. Marilyn's analysis of the draft and women cuts right to the heart of the matter. I like her forthrightness: "Are we willing to join our Amish sisters in jail?" Connie writes so clearly and makes fine suggestions for action in countering militarism in schools. So each writer in her own way tries to be faithful to be "doers of the Word." And thanks to Winifred for opening our eyes to our Chinese sisters. May we pray for ourselves and them, too.... Thanks, too, to Beryl and Dorothy for writing how prison can become a powerhouse. Please send a copy of this issue to Mary Sprunger-Froese, F.C.I. Women General, Box 3150, Ft. Worth, Tex. 76119. [See News and Verbs for an item on Mary.—Ed] Would you also place my judge friend on the mailing list....—*Hedy Sawadsky, Colorado Springs, Colo. (28 February 1981)*

Dear Muriel... Back at typesetting, I got the notion for the following "Vitae." It's appalling what trivia people list to make themselves look important and competent. Eight years ago I did the same, and some of the things I

listed I really hated doing but it looked impressive.... Now what would be important for people to know about me? I love to feel the cool, moist, spring earth under my hands as I pat it snugly over newly planted seeds. I love to weed to the accompaniment of the Brown Thrasher, or see the orioles return to the elm for another year. I love to eat a mulberry dessert right off a tree. It is a delicious feeling to have cukes and beans and tomatoes to share. I feel contentment when I view the varied colors in jars of preserved summer on my shelves. What fun to share Sunday soup and bread with friends. I love to sit in contemplation of the wonder and intricacy of this world. I love a good book, or knitting by the fire, or a shared cup of tea. I love to take the time to see and hear and feel life: the life in nature, in others, and in myself....—*Lois Deckert, North Newton, Kan. (5 March 1981)*

Looking Ahead

Forthcoming *Reports* will focus on:

The Minister's Spouse, July-August 1981, Martha Smith Good, coordinator. Also Findings of the 1981 Women in Ministry Conference.

Discipleship Motives in Career Choices, September-October 1981, Edith Krause, coordinator.

Singleness and Single Parenting November-December 1981, Bertha Beachy, coordinator.

Women/Health/Sexuality, January-February 1982, Rosie Epp, coordinator.

Are you aware of written or audio-visual resources on these topics? Have you (or do you know someone) researching or writing on these topics? What actions have been taken in these areas in your community or congregation? Send to Editor!

The *Report* is a bi-monthly publication of the MCC Peace Section Task Force on Women in Church and Society. Correspondence should be sent to Editor Muriel Thiessen Stackley, 4830 Woodland, Lincoln, NE 68516.

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